

4-H CLUB WORK AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE EXTENSION SERVICE
IN THE UNITED STATES*

By
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Objectives

4-H Club work in the United States is a voluntary, specialized educational enterprise for rural young people and is conducted as an integral part of the general Extension organization by the United States Department of Agriculture, the State colleges of agriculture, and the county extension organizations cooperating. As such, it shares in the objectives common to all educational institutions and movements in its concern with the development of individual abilities and capacities for learning, intellectual and moral character, qualities of effective citizenship, and the like. Its distinctive educational objectives are:

1. To help rural boys and girls to develop desirable ideals and standards for farming, homemaking, community life, and citizenship, and a sense of responsibility for their attainment.
2. To afford rural boys and girls technical instruction in farming and homemaking, that they may acquire skill and understanding in these fields and a clearer vision of agriculture as a basic industry, and of homemaking as a worthy occupation.
3. To provide rural boys and girls an opportunity to "learn by doing" through conducting certain farm and home enterprises, and demonstrating to others what they have learned.
4. To teach rural boys and girls the value of research, and to develop in them a scientific attitude toward the problems of the farm and the home.
5. To train rural boys and girls in cooperative action to the end that they may increase their accomplishments and, through associated efforts, better assist in solving rural problems.
6. To develop in rural boys and girls habits of healthful living, to provide them with information and direction in the intelligent use of leisure, and to arouse in them worthy ambitions and a desire to continue to learn, in order that they may live fuller and richer lives.
7. To teach and to demonstrate to rural boys and girls methods designed to improve practices in agriculture and homemaking, to the end that farm incomes may be increased, standards of living improved, and the satisfactions of farm life enhanced.

1/ Organization, 4-H Club Work.

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Organization

In each county, a county extension agent, under the general direction of the State extension office, supervises the organization of 4-H Clubs. He guides the formulation of the club program for the year, supplies State and Federal bulletins, advises with members of the county 4-H Club council or committee and the local club leaders, conducts such gatherings as county 4-H camps, club picnics, round-ups, exhibits, fairs, and achievement days; and evaluates the results at the close of the year.

A county 4-H Club council or committee is usually an important part of every county extension organization. Such a council or committee may be composed of local leaders, parents, experienced members, and farm people interested in the development of the 4-H Club program. Under the guidance of the county extension agents, such county club councils or committees usually study the needs of the county, help to plan county 4-H activities, lend support to the work of the local leaders and perform other duties as situations change and needs arise.

The local volunteer leader is regarded as important to the whole 4-H program. This person usually is an outstanding man or woman resident of the community, interested in young people and willing to spend some time in helping the members of a club to plan their own program for the year. All such leaders are expected to attend regular club meetings; train members in various 4-H activities; visit the homes of members to see how their demonstrations are progressing; give advice and encouragement when needed; accompany members to club events outside the community; and assume responsibility in relation to members' general group activities.

In almost every 4-H Club, certain minimum organization goals are set up. In a number of States, they are as follows:

1. Each club shall have a membership of at least five working on the same enterprise.
2. There shall be a local leader in charge during the club year.
3. There shall be a local club organization with necessary officers and with duties as prescribed in a club constitution.
4. There shall be a definite program of work for the year developed largely by the members themselves under skilled guidance.
5. There shall be at least six regular club meetings during the year.
6. A local exhibit shall be held annually by the club members.
7. There shall be a club demonstration team which must give at least one public demonstration in the home community.
8. Each club member shall learn to judge the results of the work undertaken.

9. At least 60 percent of the members must complete the farm or home demonstration and file a final report with the county or State club leader.
10. An achievement-day program shall be held at the completion of the work.

In organizing a 4-H Club, young people should be led to elect their own officers, appoint their own committees, and plan their own programs. Officers and members of committees should be encouraged to assume full responsibility. Training schools for them alone may be held. Throughout, the function of the adult leader is to study the members of the group carefully so that he may skillfully guide them to adjust in a constructive way to the different situations that may arise in the group.

Probably the most important phase of the 4-H Club organization is the regular meeting. It is held at stated intervals at least once a month in keeping with good parliamentary procedure. Every meeting usually consists of three parts - (1) business, (2) demonstrations and discussions in connection with the project work under way and community improvement activities undertaken by the group as a whole, and (3) social activities.

The outstanding success of 4-H Clubs so organized reinforces the belief that 4-H young people, through their own community organization, are furnishing a potential force in community development which is doing much toward improving general farm and home conditions.

The General 4-H Program and Its Significance

For many years in the United States 4-H members, in their organized clubs, have been planning their own farm and home programs in relation to their own interests and needs and those of the community. Problems are faced in the farm homes, the fields, the barns, the orchards, the gardens, the markets and the various community meeting places. Solutions are sought and programs developed with all members of a 4-H Club participating in accordance with general organization procedure. Each 4-H Club member then, in keeping with the projects and activities determined, performs a worthwhile piece of work under the supervision of the local leader and county extension agent, that will demonstrate or teach the better way in home-making or agriculture.

Because of the various types of agriculture in the United States, more than 50 different phases of homemaking and farm demonstrations may be undertaken by 4-H Club members as an integral part of county extension programs. In homemaking activities, a club member may grow a garden in keeping with the dietary needs of the family, and can the surplus garden products; plan, prepare, and serve attractive and healthful meals; make or select for herself and other members of the family, attractive, suitable clothing in keeping with the family budget; keep personal accounts; assume a share of responsibility for daily household tasks; at times, take over the management of the home when mother is away from home; render more comfortable and satisfying the home itself; add to the attractiveness and beauty of the exterior of the home by planting native shrubs and trees; or help mother in the intelligent care of younger brothers and sisters.

In agricultural club activities a member may voluntarily choose to grow an acre or more of cotton, corn, or some other crop; raise a garden, market such fresh vegetables and fruits as may be practicable to sell, and can the surplus; raise a flock of poultry; purchase, breed, and care for a sow, and for her litter of pigs, to maturity; care for a dairy calf to maturity and build a dairy herd; run and repair farm machinery; or conduct some other agricultural phase of work that will meet a farm or community need.

The benefits of the 4-H Club program to the individual are varied and often far-reaching. Not every 4-H Club undertaking is a financial success, naturally, but unless some unfortunate situation occurs, the club member usually realizes profit from the enterprise. Such profit gives the member a new sense of what he can do through his own effort. Through this phase of club work also, many club members are led to have bank accounts, to increase the size of their livestock project, to start a go-to-college fund, or to go into partnership with their parents on some permanent basis. Thus 4-H Club work brings parents and young people together through a common interest making for family solidarity.

Members also benefit from their contacts with their leaders, who know how to do things; with the work of one another, which frequently involves acquiring added interesting information; and with men and women of affairs while participating in various 4-H events. From time to time they meet with the research and teaching staffs of the State agricultural colleges and the United States Department of Agriculture, with outstanding farmers and business men, all leaders in different lines of work--men and women of achievement, who inspire by their accomplishments and outlook. Club members often are given a larger view of life, through opportunity to attend 4-H camps and short courses conducted by the State colleges of agriculture. In addition, several national events for 4-H Club members are held annually, culminating with the National 4-H Club Camp at the Nation's Capital. All these various meetings serve to awaken farm youth and to stimulate in them the desire to do and to attain.

By such means also, 4-H Club work helps rural young people to gain valuable work experiences and to realize upon the opportunities around them. It leads them to feel that they have a useful part of the world's work to do. It tests their fitness for farm life so that only those who like farming will engage in it. It gives them a keen sense of their responsibility to meet their financial obligations. It trains them in cooperation through a work and play program planned largely by themselves. It develops leadership through tasks assumed in keeping with their abilities and for the service of others. It helps them to earn and save for their education. It helps them to establish homes of their own. Finally, because their attention is constantly being focused upon the needs of their own communities and the possibilities for improvement, 4-H Club boys and girls develop a sense of community responsibility that stimulates them to participate in community improvement activities alongside their parents and neighbors on a common basis. Thus, in the United States, for more than a quarter of a century through the work of the 4-H agricultural and homemaking clubs, rural young people from 10 to 21 years of age, over 10,000,000 in all, have been helped to take their places in their own homes and communities as young citizens, imbued with the desire to do, to earn, and to serve. This consciousness of their own importance and of the importance of their 4-H activities to the welfare of rural communities has led them to manifest those qualities of worth and integrity which make character and which, in turn, have often helped them to become leaders in the important civic affairs of State and Nation.